

WORK BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, over the next few weeks, Senators will work to conclude the business of the 114th Congress as we begin looking forward to the 115th. We have a lot to do, including approving several conference reports and funding the government. It is good to see the respective committees making important progress on conference reports for the National Defense Authorization Act and the Water Resources Development Act.

We will work with our counterparts in the House to consider each of those in the coming days and to send final bills to the President's desk for signature. We will also take up the 21st-century cures bill, which contains resources to promote medical research, including advancing regenerative medicine, among many other important provisions. Sometime soon we will also take up the Iran Sanctions Extension Act, which provides underlying authorities necessary to reimpose sanctions if those sanctions are called for on the country that has continued to exhibit disturbing and very aggressive behavior. And of course we will work to pass the continuing resolution to fund the government.

I would also like to note that my friend from Alaska, Senator MURKOWSKI, is continuing her efforts to advance the Energy Policy Modernization Act, which passed the Senate with large bipartisan support earlier this year. As the chair of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, she has been a champion of this critical bill and has never stopped working to move it forward. I appreciate her work in that capacity, as well as the many other Members who have been leaders on each of the issues I just named.

I would encourage colleagues on both sides to continue working together so that we can complete our work very soon.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DACA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, during the Presidential campaign, which just concluded, President-Elect Donald Trump made some inflammatory remarks about immigration and immigrants. I condemned those remarks, as did many in both political parties, and I remain concerned about the impact that rhetoric has on America and the people who are living in the United States.

On election night, Mr. Trump said, "Now it is time for America to bind the

wounds of division." As one step in bringing our Nation together, Mr. Trump should change his thinking on at least one aspect of immigration, and I hope even more. As the President-elect knows, we are, in fact, a nation of immigrants, and immigration makes America stronger.

Like me, Mr. Trump is the son of an immigrant. His wife will be only the second immigrant in American history to serve as First Lady. During a recent interview, Mr. Trump acknowledged that millions of undocumented immigrants are "terrific people." That is a good start; words matter. The tone the President-elect sets with the language he uses can help to bind the divisions in America, but actions matter as well. I hope that one of President-Elect Trump's first actions will be to pledge to continue the program known as DACA.

It was 6 years ago that I sent a letter to President Barack Obama, and joining me in that letter was Senator Dick Lugar, a Republican Senator from Indiana. It was a bipartisan letter, and we asked President Obama to stop the deportations of young immigrants who grew up in this country. These young people have come to be known as DREAMers. They were brought to the United States as children. They grew up singing the national anthem in their classrooms and pledging allegiance to the only flag they ever knew—the American flag.

These DREAMers are casualties of our broken immigration system. They were brought here as children, toddlers, infants, babies. They didn't have any voice in the decision of their family to come to America. They were brought here to live. We invested in them. We put them in our school systems. It really makes no sense, since many of them have become accomplished and promising young people, to give up on them now and deport them back to countries they have never known.

The President of the United States, Barack Obama, responded. He established the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which is known as DACA. DACA provides temporary renewable legal status to immigrant students who arrived in the United States as children. What does it take? A student has to fill out an application form.

When this Executive action went into effect, I joined with Congressman LUIS GUTIÉRREZ of Chicago. We decided on the first day of eligibility we would set up some tables at the Navy Pier in Chicago, and we would welcome young people to come in and sign up. These were undocumented young people who had grown up in the United States, and now they had a chance because of the President's Executive action to ask for temporary protected status and a work permit.

It cost money, almost \$500. When they submitted their names, they also submitted their names for a criminal

background check to make certain they had no serious criminal offense and they were no threat to this country. Congressman GUTIÉRREZ and I expected several hundred to show up. We had immigration lawyers ready to volunteer to help them fill out the forms.

We were stunned. The night before, at midnight, they started lining up in the dark with their parents, and they waited all night to come into that room and to sign those applications so that they, as undocumented young people in America, would have a fighting chance to become part of America's future. That is all they asked for. They didn't ask for jobs. They didn't ask for government programs. They don't qualify for very many, if any. All they asked for was a chance—a chance to live here and not be deported and a chance to work here.

So far, in the few years that DACA has been in effect, over 740,000 young people have signed up. They came forward, paid their fees, and went through the background checks. They were approved. Now they are working or going to school.

DACA has allowed these DREAMers to make contributions to America that are valuable to all of us. They are soldiers, nurses, teachers, engineers, police officers, and they are aspiring to the highest levels of education in our country. These DACA recipients are making important contributions to our economy.

A new study by the Center for American Progress finds that ending DACA would cost the United States \$433.4 billion in gross domestic product over the next 10 years. These are not just bright young students; they are great workers. They will be great professionals. They will help people, and they will make America stronger.

DACA is based on the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is bipartisan legislation that I first introduced 15 years ago. If you are going to serve in the Senate, you have to be patient. I didn't dream I would be standing here 15 years later, still asking for the Senate to approve the DREAM Act. In the meantime, what President Obama did was to say we will protect these young people while Congress debates the future of immigration reform, but we will make sure that they can stay in this country without fear of deportation.

If the DREAM Act is enacted into law—and, incidentally, it passed the Senate several years ago—it will give these undocumented students a chance to earn their way to legal status and citizenship. DACA is clearly legal. Like every President before him, President Obama has the authority to set immigration policy for his administration. DACA is also smart and realistic. It is a way to enforce our immigration laws the right way, to make sure that these young people who have done nothing wrong, who have no criminal problems, who have paid their fee and registered with the government are allowed to

stay without fear of a knock on the door.

The Department of Homeland Security has only enough funding to deport a small fraction of the undocumented immigrants in our country each year. President Obama has said he wants to focus those resources on those who should not be in the United States, those who could do us harm. That is just common sense. At the same time, the President said we shouldn't waste our resources on deporting young immigrant students who grew up in the United States and are making contributions to our future.

During the campaign, President-Elect Trump pledged to rescind and end DACA. I believe that after his administration studies the issue, there is a chance he will reconsider when he comes to know these "terrific people."

I have come to the floor of the Senate now for over 10 years, telling the stories of these DREAMers. There was a time when they were afraid to come out publicly and tell America who they were. They had been warned by their parents since they were little kids to be careful. If you talk to the wrong person, if you do the wrong thing, if the police knock on the door, you may be deported along with the rest of your family, so be careful.

As kids will, these young people across America have decided they are not going to hide who they are. They want to tell America their story, and I have tried to help them. When they have sent us their biographies, along with photographs, I have come to the floor on about a hundred different occasions to tell the stories of these DREAMers. Each one, in my estimation, is more amazing than the next, and today is no exception.

This is Rey Pineda. In 1990, when Rey was 2 years old, his family came to the United States from Mexico. Rey grew up in Atlanta, GA. He worked hard and was an honor roll student in high school. He became the first member of his family to attend college. In 2010, he graduated with a major in philosophy from Southern Catholic College in Dawsonville, GA.

Rey is a devout Catholic, and he decided to attend Mundelein Seminary in my home State of Illinois. Rey felt that God was calling him to be a priest, but his spiritual path was blocked. Rey is undocumented. Rey is a DREAMer.

Then, in 2012, everything changed. President Obama's Executive action established DACA. In March of 2013, Rey was approved, filed his fee, went through the background check, and did everything he was asked to do. He received his DACA status, and he knew that at least for 2 years he would not be subject to deportation. That allowed him to become a deacon in the Catholic Church 2 months later, in May of 2013.

In 2014, Rey entered the priesthood after he graduated magna cum laude from Mundelein Seminary in Illinois. He has a master of divinity degree. Today, Father Rey Pineda is a priest at

the Cathedral of Christ the King in Atlanta, GA. He wrote me a letter, and here is what he said about DACA:

Like many Dreamers, the U.S. is really the only country I know. DACA was an answer to many years of prayers. Without DACA I would not have been able to serve as a priest in my community. I believe my faith in God has brought me to this point in my life; but my faith in America's promise has pushed me to keep fighting for peace, justice, and opportunity in this great country I proudly call home.

If DACA is eliminated—and that threat has been made—Father Rey Pineda will lose his legal status and be subject to deportation, being sent back to a country that he hasn't lived in since he was 2 years old. That would be a tragedy for Father Rey Pineda and his congregation and the hundreds of people who count on him as their priest.

Consider this: There is a chronic shortage of Catholic priests in America. Since 1975, the number of priests has declined by 33 percent while the number of American Catholics has grown by 43 percent. Hundreds of parishes have been forced to close or consolidate. Nearly one out of five Catholic parishes in America have no priest.

This shortage of priests is not limited to the Catholic Church. The problem is so serious that Congress has established a religious worker visa to allow people from overseas to come in on a visa and serve as priests in communities. It is happening all across my State of Illinois, and I bet it is happening in Iowa. If you go to parishes in rural areas, there will be priests from all over the world. I recently met one in Rome who was in Southern Illinois at Pinckneyville, and he was from Nigeria.

At a time when the United States is actively importing ministers and priests from foreign countries, why do we want to deport Father Rey Pineda? This makes no sense. Listen to what Father Rey told me about his role as a priest who is an undocumented immigrant:

I believe my entire journey has prepared me to be compassionate with the sufferings of many people I encounter. I look at my ministry as a calling to build bridges between people from all walks of life. Diversity sometimes brings challenges between people and I want to help heal those differences.

After the most divisive election in recent memory, I believe that Father Rey Pineda and other DREAMers like him have an important role to play in healing the differences that divide America. I am hoping that President-Elect Trump will see this and will continue the DACA program.

Let me be clear. If there is an attempt to shut down DACA, I will do everything in my power as a U.S. Senator to protect the DREAMers who have stepped forward and contributed their talents to our great country.

Many of those DREAMers and their parents spoke to me that day at Navy Pier and ever since. They said: Senator, are you sure? Are you sure that

we should sign up with this government? We have spent a lifetime trying to stay out of trouble, stay out of the view of people, not cause any problems, go about our business, raise our families, do our jobs, go to our church. If our children register with this government, will that come back at a future time and be used against us?

At the time, I said—and I believe it now—that America would stand behind these young people. We will not allow them to be deported after what they have been through. We will not tell them that by complying with the requirements of our government, you have penalized yourself in the future. We want to give them a chance. Now is the time for America, this Nation of immigrants, to heal the wounds that divided us during this election. Let's start with the DREAMers, let's start with DACA, let's start with the young people who will make America better and stronger in the years to come. They are the best in this country. Let's make them the best for America's future. I hope and pray the President-elect's words and actions in the coming weeks and months will, in fact, bring us together.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, 3 weeks ago Americans went to the polls. Voters were deeply divided on whether Democrats or Republicans should be in charge. Donald Trump is the President-elect, missing the popular vote by more than 2 million people. But there is one thing Americans are not divided on, one issue on which they sent out a message loud and clear. According to exit polls, 70 percent of voters said that they think the American economy and the lawmakers who oversee it are owned—owned—by big companies and special interests. That is 70 percent of everyone—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

In the closing days of this Congress, Big Pharma has its hand out for a bunch of special giveaways and favors that are packed together in something called the 21st Century Cures bill. It is on track to get a vote in the House this week and then get rammed through the Senate. I have been taking a look at the details, and when the American voters say that Congress is owned by big companies, this bill is exactly what they are talking about.

Now we face a choice: Will this Congress say "Yes, we are bought and paid for" or will we stand up and work for the American people?